United Nations A/51/PV.57

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

57th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 12 November 1996, 10.00 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 27

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/355 and Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.15)

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Carlos Lage Dávila, Vice-President of the Council of State and Secretary of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.15.

Mr. Lage Dávila (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is an honour for our delegation to submit for consideration by the General Assembly the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", the reasons for which I will explain.

The vote that will take place today commands the attention of millions of Cubans. The Assembly has an opportunity not only to vote against an unfair policy but also to ensure that no State, however powerful, may ignore international law. The bells that today toll for Cuba may toll for another independent nation tomorrow. We appreciate and are deeply thankful for the support members may extend to our just cause.

The resolutions that have been adopted on four previous occasions by the General Assembly by an increasing majority of its members underscore the need to put an end to the United States economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. Nevertheless, the United States Congress and Administration recently decided to promulgate a law known as the "Helms-Burton Act", which, given its extraterritorial, unilateral and coercive nature, violates international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Even Ancient Rome did not aspire to legislation to rule the world.

President Clinton himself has said: "No one agrees with our policy towards Cuba". At least this is recognized. The United States is therefore not just a prominent debtor to the United Nations in terms of money, but, in turning a deaf ear to appeals made by the international community, it is also a major moral defaulter.

The United States-Cuban dispute did not begin on 1 January 1959. Back in the early nineteenth century, before the ideas of Marx and Engels had emerged, United States leaders already referred to Cuba as a ripe fruit destined to fall into the hands of its northern neighbour.

Twenty-eight years before Fidel Castro was born, United States troops intervened in our country, snatching triumph from the Cuban forces that had fought against Spanish domination for three decades.

96-86779 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Long before the inception of the United Nations and the beginning of the cold war, overt and covert manipulation by successive United States administrations, through the embassy in Havana, had become institutionalized in a shameful spectacle that lasted more than half a century.

The shortages, corruption and poverty caused by a dictatorship that bled the nation — and, instead of a blockade, enjoyed the unconditional support of the United States — explain why the Cuban people were forced into revolution.

The policy of blockade and aggression targeted against Cuba from the very beginning of the revolution preceded Cuba's declaration of socialism. The United States cut off Cuba's sugar quota, began the embargo on all kinds of goods intended for Cuba and ordered its enterprises in Cuba not to process Soviet crude oil.

Light aircraft from the United States strafed cities and burned cane fields. The United States openly supported and encouraged terrorist groups, designed and implemented assassination plans against the leaders of the revolution, severed diplomatic relations with Cuba in January 1961 and financed and trained the mercenary troops that invaded our territory at the Bay of Pigs in April the same year.

When President John F. Kennedy imposed the blockade on Cuba on 3 February 1962, he was simply legalizing a practice that had been emerging over the previous three years. Since then, and against the global background of confrontation between two blocs, the history of relations between our two countries has been marked by confrontation, sometimes extreme, as in the days of the October 1962 missile crisis, which brought the world to the brink of the nuclear precipice.

Throughout the years, the most diverse and fallacious arguments have been used as a smokescreen to mask the war against our heroic people. The truth is that the blockade is rooted in the expansionist urge that has characterized the United States ever since it emerged as a nation; in the genuinely independent character of our revolutionary process; in the clear-cut measures we have taken for the benefit of the humblest strata of our population; in the morbid determination of United States rulers to impose their will on Cuba; and in the fashioning of a domestic policy that is not always in the best interests of the American people.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led many to believe that the demise of socialism in Cuba was inevitable. The current United States Administration stepped up the blockade. It supported first the Torricelli Act and then the Helms-Burton Act. The prevailing idea was that, although it had failed before, the time had come for the blockade to work in earnest.

The disappearance of the USSR and the socialist camp was certainly a hard blow. Overnight, Cuba was faced with a 75 per cent drop in imports and an almost total loss of markets for its main exports. However, without any external source of financing and in the midst of a strengthened blockade, we began to carve ourselves a place in the world's economy.

We have suffered very severe material limitations. We have endured shortages of food, medicine, electricity, transportation to work, shoes for school and soap to wash or bathe. Life for Cuban families has been hard during the years of this special period. Rarely in history has a nation been put through such a trial. It was only thanks to the fairness of the revolution, our people's capacity for endurance, Fidel's leadership and a broad-based policy of permanent consultation with the people and consensus that these fatalist augurs have been proven wrong and we have been able to come so far.

There is no doubt that the road ahead is still difficult, very difficult, but no one with any common sense now wonders whether the revolution will collapse or not. Suffice it to mention that, in 1996, the Cuban economy will grow at a rate of about 7 per cent. Although we have resisted and begun to recover, it is easy to imagine the enormous opportunities we would have and the many sufferings our people could be spared were it not for the hurdles imposed by the blockade.

The term "embargo" is a euphemism. Under the blockade, Cuba is denied access to the United States market, the biggest and most important in the world, to the international financial institutions or to the current sources of financing available in developed countries. We are forced to use short-term commercial loans, not only as working capital but also for investment and development: the interest rates for these loans are substantially higher than those available on the world market. We cannot carry out transactions directly in United States dollars and Cuban entities are not allowed to use dollar bank accounts, which leads to additional costs.

In terms of opportunity, prices and interest, our status as a country under blockade and siege forces us to trade at the greatest disadvantage. Cuba cannot buy any medicine in or from subsidiaries of the United States, even when it could save a life. Third countries cannot sell any product containing Cuban elements on the United States market, nor can we purchase anywhere in the world a product, more than 20 per cent of whose total value is represented by contents originating in the United States. It is impossible for us to participate in the preferential price agreements that most sugar-producing countries enjoy. We must sell our sugar below the world market price as we cannot trade it on the New York Exchange.

Freight costs increase appreciably as a result of more distant markets and because a ship calling on our country must wait six months before it may go to the United States.

We are denied access to American technology — as is the case with nuclear technology — and sometimes cannot even have access to that of other developed countries.

Economic espionage is practised against Cuba to hamper our trade operations and prevent the rescheduling of our foreign debt. Over 200 radio hours per day are beamed into Cuba to slander its Government and authorities and to stir up disobedience and terrorism.

While American aircraft use our corridors, our aircraft cannot use the United States international air corridors, so that they have to take roundabout routes, thereby increasing their operating costs.

American ambassadors and other officials put pressure on and require individuals, institutions and Governments and require them to refrain from investing in or trading with Cuba. This persecution has become a priority on the diplomatic agendas of its embassies throughout the world.

Because of the blockade, the Cuban people are barred from normalizing relations with the Cuban community in the United States, despite all the steps we have taken and will continue to take.

Direct flights between our two countries are banned, and we are deprived of hundreds of thousands of American tourists who, given our conditions and proximity, would otherwise travel to our country.

Armed groups that plan and execute terrorist acts against Cuba are trained in the United States. Thieves and murderers — such as the perpetrators of the Barbados sabotage who blew up a Cubana Airlines plane with 73 persons aboard in mid-air — freely walk the streets in Florida.

I could go on, but it would not be possible for me to describe the full scope of American aggression against Cuba within the limited time I have at this rostrum.

This criminal policy, which has already lasted over a third of a century, has inflicted damage on us in excess of $60 billion, five times the external debt of our country. While the blockade has always been the orphan of reason, today it even lacks pretexts.

What can possibly justify the continuation of that policy today if, according to the presidential decree issued by President Kennedy, the blockade was originally imposed under the authority of the Trading with the Enemy Act, in the context of the confrontation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries? Where is the enemy? Where is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics? Where is the socialist bloc?

How can a continued, open state of war against our country be explained if the cold war has been over for five years? How can this constant and stubborn warmongering attitude be justified if the Pentagon itself agrees that Cuba is not a threat to American national security? What are the pretexts used today?

Blaming Cuba because American companies have not received compensation for the nationalizations that took place at the triumph of the revolution has no foundation. The proof of this is that all other parties affected have been or are being compensated, as can be attested to by France, Switzerland, Canada, the United Kingdom and other States.

It is also well known that at the end of the Second World War, the United States concluded compensation agreements with several of the then socialist countries; however, it refused, and continues to refuse, to reach agreements with Cuba.

Legalizing the right of Cuban-Americans to file claims in United States courts for alleged properties nationalized more than 30 years ago mocks international law, the United States Supreme Court — which in 1964 ruled that those nationalizations were legal — and the constitutional principle that all citizens are equal before the law.

Would not American citizens of Russian origin, for instance, also have the same right with respect to their properties confiscated after the Bolshevik revolution?

Accusing Cuba of human rights violations is an unprecedented affront that we denounce here with our heads held high. One hundred per cent of the Cuban population has access to free health care services. We have one doctor for every 193 inhabitants, and one nurse for every 142 inhabitants. More than 23,000 Cuban doctors have served in 45 countries around the world.

Our infant mortality rate is 8 for every 1000 live births. If Latin America had Cuba's current infant mortality rate, 500,000 children would be saved each year who never have any human rights now but die a few months after birth. And Cuba is not a rich country; it is a poor country, under blockade.

Access to all levels of education is free in Cuba. Illiteracy is non-existent, education is universal up to the sixth grade, and 50 per cent of the Cuban work force has at least a high school education. We have one teacher for every 42 inhabitants, and not one is unemployed.

Two hundred million of the world's children sleep in the streets today; none of them is Cuban. One hundred million children under the age of 13 are forced to work to survive; none of them is Cuban. Over a million children are forced into child prostitution, and tens of thousands have been the victims of the trade in human organs; none of them is Cuban. Twenty-five thousand children die every day in the world from measles, malaria, diphtheria, pneumonia and malnutrition; again, none of them is Cuban.

In barely 24 hours the World Food Summit will open in Rome. More than 35,000 persons in the world will die from starvation between today and tomorrow. Blockades should not be applied against a small sovereign country. They should be applied against hunger, selfishness, ignorance and apathy in the face of the world's problems.

Not one person has disappeared and there has not been one single case of torture in Cuba in over 36 years of revolution; nor has there been a single case of political assassination. Death squads are unknown in our country. Racial discrimination can barely be remembered.

Neither drug trafficking, organized crime nor terrorism exist in Cuba. Rulers in Cuba do not steal the nation's money. No-one is sentenced without a trial and the legal rights of all citizens are guaranteed on an equal footing. We have, and this is the absolute truth, a clean human rights record.

We are also accused by the United States of having a one-party political system and of not being democratic. There is much we could say here if we compare the true exercise of democracy in the world. However, we do not claim to be the sole possessors of the truth, let alone criticize anyone. We simply defend our right to choose our own path. The world is very complex and difficult. It is absurd and inappropriate to have a single model imposed like a straitjacket on all nations, under any circumstances, and in disregard for their economic and social development, history and culture. The one-party system cannot be the cause of the blockade because Cuba is not the only country with a single party. What is more, there are Governments in the world where a monarchy is in power, without any party or constitution, but they are not blockaded, nor should they be, and quite the opposite, they are close allies of the United States.

Accusations are levelled at us because we sentence members of small counter-revolutionary groups, financed and organized by a foreign power that attacks the nation, though only in cases of violations of the country's laws. It is true, we acknowledge that we do so, and it cannot be otherwise, because our people are ready to defend their independence and their achievements at all costs. No one can force a country to live under siege and require it to govern its affairs as if it belonged in the happiest and most peaceful of all worlds.

Some tell us that we should change in order to solve this conflict, but the terms "blockade" and "changes" are opposites that contradict one another. Throughout its history, Cuba has given ample proof that it has too much self-respect to be influenced by pressures in matters that are solely the responsibility of its own people. We are not against change, but against the embargo, which prevents us from introducing all the changes we would like to make to improve our socialist society.

Cuba has no offensive weapons or nuclear missiles. Our weapons are our example and our morale and those have never been nor could ever be blockaded. Cuba has no military bases on United States territory; it is the United States that keeps a military base in the Cuban territory against the wish of our country. Cuba has not blockaded the United States; it is the United States that has blockaded and waged an economic and political war on Cuba.

Demands must be made of the aggressor, not of the victim. There is no reason at all to blockade Cuba. No one has the right to impose an embargo, and the United States lacks the moral authority to call on others to respect human rights when it is so far from serving as a model in this field. The United States ranks among the countries with the highest rates of violence and terrorism. Unfortunately, the tragic events in Oklahoma City were a product of United States society. In becoming the main drug consumption market, the United States has created a terrible and uncontrollable problem for its own society and for the underdeveloped nations that produce and supply the drugs. Infant mortality in the United States is twice as high among black children as among white children.

The presidential elections that have just been held cost $800 million, three times as much as in 1992, and registered the lowest voting turnout in the past 72 years of electoral history. In the United States, over $700 million are spent every day on the military to defend the country against no one know whom. By 1997, these expenditures will be 54 times the budget for technical assistance of all the United Nations funds and programmes combined. Such squandering is an insult to the more than 800 million people in the world who have nothing to eat, the more than 1 billion adults who are illiterate and the more than 1.5 billion human beings who have no access to health services.

The most aggressive racism and xenophobia, the most rampant consumerism, increasing inequality, attacks on social security and the discrediting of institutions are some of the evils present in United States society today. How can the United States even think of governing the world when it is faced with so many difficulties in governing itself? The international community may admire a country for its multiethnic composition, its technological breakthroughs, its enterprising spirit, its progress in art, science and sports, but the world will never accept a country as a leader because of its nuclear arsenals, its arrogance, its extraterritorial legislation and its unilateral sanctions.

The Cuban people are the main victims of the embargo and we Cubans who have to endure it know that very well. However, this aberrant policy also affects the people of the United States and violates their human rights. United States citizens cannot understand that they are banned from travelling to Cuba, that they are liable under law to pay fines of up to $250,000 for exercising that constitutional right, and that their compatriots are being beaten for trying to donate computers to the Cuban health care system.

In 1995 and 1996, coinciding with the period when the Helms-Burton Act was being debated and approved, over 400 new brands of United States products were registered in Cuba and more than 300 United States businessmen visited Cuba. Many United States companies are now establishing indirect links with Cuba, and their number will continue to grow as an inevitable result of economic globalization. The United States companies, whether or not they had properties in Cuba, are as a rule more interested in doing business than in being used as a pretext for an ever-growing policy of hostility and confrontation.

The United States is very concerned about emigration. Economic motivations have long been the essential cause behind Cuban emigration. As long as the blockade persists, it will continue, against our will and despite all the measures we take, to encourage uncontrolled emigration to the United States. The new wall that is being erected on the Mexican border, several times as large as the demolished Berlin wall, cannot be built in the waters of the Caribbean.

The peoples of Cuba and the United States are not the protagonists, but rather the victims, of this policy frozen in the past and now ripe for change. It is inconceivable that in the United States an alienated ultra-right wing allied with a fascist minority of the Cuban emigrant community should dictate the policy to be pursued with regard to Cuba, and that such a policy is complied with even though it is against the interests of the people of the United States itself and of the international community.

A President of the United States should not be held hostage by the policies of his enemies.

Recently, there has been talk in this country of building a bridge to the twenty-first century. How can a bridge be built to the future if it is not possible to lay a much shorter bridge, just 90 miles long, over which peace in this hemisphere can cross? How can cruising the Internet be contemplated, yet travel to Cuba banned?

We reaffirm Cuba's readiness to discuss any issue with the United States. We require no precondition other than an absolute respect for our indefeasible right to freedom and sovereignty. The Cuban revolution has provided more than enough proof of its honourable conduct and responsibility with respect to its compliance with international commitments. If any country is well aware of this fact, it is the United States.

Cuba resolved the problem of aircraft hijacking — a weapon designed to be used against us. Cuba provided compensation for its nationalization programme to former owners who were supported by their Governments. Cuba honoured, minute by minute, the agreements that led to peace in southern African. Cuba is meticulously fulfilling its migration agreements. Cuba is cooperating when necessary with the United States authorities in the fight against drug trafficking, despite the absence of any agreements in this respect.

The United States has re-established diplomatic relations with Viet Nam. Trade between the two nations is increasing every year. To the satisfaction of all, a past in which 58,000 American nationals and 3.4 million Vietnamese were killed has been overcome. Today, several of those responsible for the Viet Nam war have acknowledged, both in private and in public, that it was a mistake — that they were "wrong, terribly wrong".

Will it take 20 years before the current President of the United States, or one of his colleagues, writes in his memoirs that maintaining the blockade was a mistake — a "terrible mistake" — of his Administration? If putting things right calls for wisdom, rectifying a policy that is so irrational, cruel and, furthermore, doomed to failure, is an endeavour that requires honesty and courage — especially in a country of such complexity and in which so many interests are involved. It does not require pretexts or appearances to change a policy, but determination and courage.

John F. Kennedy was President during the Bay of Pigs invasion, the imposition of the blockade and the October missile crisis. It is no secret to anyone that, days before his unexpected death, Kennedy was questioning the policy of confrontation with our country, and that on 22 November 1963, the day on which he was assassinated, a French journalist was discussing the issue with Fidel Castro on his behalf. The shameful and tragic assassination in Dallas cut short that plan.

During the Carter Administration, interests sections were opened in both capitals, the United States eased some of the Cuban travel restrictions on United States citizens and various agreements were reached. We are well aware that the foreign policy of the world's most powerful country is not governed by reason or justice — at least in periods before elections. In these election contests, what are sought are not ideas to make the nation greater, but votes to win the election. We know that that is reality, although we reject it out of basic ethical considerations. Electoral tensions have already come to an end in this country in which we are meeting. President William Clinton has been re-elected, and another Democratic Administration has begun its term. We believe that the time has also come for a new United States policy towards Cuba.

Cuba reiterates its desire to maintain normal relations with all the countries in the world, including the United States. But if, despite this mass of political truth, United States policy continues to be determined by electoral considerations or petty domestic policy interests, and our country continues to be threatened, blockaded and harassed; if hunger continues to be used to bend a nation whose only crime is its desire to live in freedom and independence and implement all the social justice that is possible in this world; if the international clamour for an end to such a monstrous crime continues to go unheeded; then history will show that the dignity of a people is stronger than the entire power of an empire. The honour of a nation, however small, can never be blockaded.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The item we are now considering bears on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The General Assembly has already adopted a number of resolutions, reaffirming such established norms governing international relations as respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and urging the countries concerned to fulfil the obligations set out in the Charter. Regrettably, however, the United States, turning a deaf ear to the just demands of the international community, is continuing, and further intensifying, the blockade and sanctions that it has imposed on Cuba for over 30 years. This has not only brought difficulties for Cuba's economic and social development, seriously hurting the Cuban people, especially the health and well-being of the women and children in that country, but has also affected the normal trade and economic exchanges of many countries with Cuba, seriously undermining their legitimate interests. Like many other delegations, the Chinese delegation cannot but express its deep concern and regret over this situation.

It is the right of the people of every country to choose their own social system and mode of development in the light of their specific national circumstances. This right should be respected by the international community. Differences and problems existing between States should be settled through dialogue and negotiation based on equality. It is an expression of power politics wilfully to resort to embargoes, blockades and sanctions, to exert

pressure on other sovereign States and to interfere in the internal affairs of others in disregard of their legitimate rights and interests. It constitutes a violation of the basic norms governing international relations and, instead of facilitating the settlement of disputes, will only further intensify contradictions.

We call on the United States to changes its course of action in this regard by renouncing the practice of interfering in the internal affairs and infringing upon the interests of other countries, putting an immediate end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. Dialogue and negotiations aimed at achieving a settlement of disputes on the basis of equality and mutual respect for sovereignty should be started instead.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): For the past four years, the General Assembly has called on Member States to refrain from promulgating and applying laws and measures whose extraterritorial effects affect the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, as well as the freedom of trade and navigation.

Unfortunately, up to now the facts have been different. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of my country, Angel Gurría, noted in his statement during the recent general debate that

> "we view with growing concern the fact that, in supposed support of freedom and democracy, action is being taken in the opposite direction through the adoption of laws in the field of trade — the nerve centre of contemporary progress — that are extraterritorial in scope and in compiete disagreement with the fundamental principles of international law". (Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 13th meeting, p. 14)

Let me underscore one again the opinion of the Inter-American Juridical Committee of the Organization of American States, which is reproduced in document A/51/394 and which contains a valuable study and findings on the so-called Helms-Burton Act. It concludes unequivocally that the bases and application of this legislation are not in conformity with international law.

In accordance with the principles of its foreign policy and its adherence to the norms of international law, Mexico has neither promulgated nor applies legislative provisions which are extraterritorial in scope. Furthermore, my country has consistently rejected the use of coercive measures as a means of pressure in international relations.

Mexico reiterates its decision to establish, in the unrestricted exercise of its sovereignty, commercial and political ties with any country it deems fit. In that context, the Act for the Protection of Commerce and Investment against Foreign Rules Contravening International Law entered into force in my country on October 22. Following the example of other countries, this legislative measure is meant to counteract the extraterritorial effects of laws of third States.

Furthermore, Mexico reaffirms that, in strict accordance with the principles of international law governing relations among States, only Cuba, in the exercise of its inalienable rights, can determine as a free, sovereign and independent State its own political, social and economic system.

The application of unilateral measures that ignore the growing negative opinion of the international community cannot constitute a solid foundation for a peaceful and secure coexistence, ruled by law. On the contrary, they only disturb the climate of tolerance and understanding that we would wish to see in relations among States.

We cannot remain indifferent to the growing health and nutritional problems facing the Cuban people, which are recorded in the report of the Secretary-General on this subject.

Mexico remains convinced that the embargo against Cuba must be lifted. In the statement I referred to, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico noted that

> "it is neither by means of blockades or exclusions, nor by the application of sanctions on third countries that democracy and human rights can be promoted. Dialogue, inclusion in multilateral forums, trade, investment and the exchange of information and persons have always proven to be the best way to disseminate the values we all share". (*ibid.*, p. 14)

We are convinced that the time to build bridges has come.

For all the reasons stated above, the delegation of Mexico will vote in favour of the draft resolution now under consideration.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*interpretation from French*): It is distressing that this year again — for the fifth year, in fact — our Assembly must again address the issue of the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". This embargo continues and has been strengthened, and it is even having an extraterritorial impact without precedent in the history of international trade relations. Given the difficult relation between these two countries, this is without a doubt a thorny and extremely complex issue. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that the world can hardly continue indefinitely to witness a situation in which an entire people, which has already suffered so much, goes on suffering from this embargo. The entire international community is called upon to do its utmost to help resolve this issue as quickly as possible.

This embargo, which is more than 30 years old, is unjustified. It undermines the sovereignty of other States and the freedom of trade and navigation, and it clearly has no place in this new age when international economic cooperation is in the forefront. Rather than seeking ways and means to assist developing countries to become part of the liberalized and globalized world economy, we find ourselves here having to discuss an economic embargo decreed by a developed nation against a developing country.

This is a painful exercise which, in the final analysis, is in the interest of neither party. In the view of our delegation, it is high time to end this kind of exercise and to find a solution acceptable to the two countries. For its part, the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic will spare no effort to contribute positively to this noble attempt to untangle the problem.

Like all other peoples of the world, the Cuban people aspires only to live in peace and thereby to enjoy international economic and commercial cooperation. We do not believe that a people — an entire people — should be punished for an indefinite duration and for reasons that are far from being justified or clear. It would be unfair for the Cuban people to be condemned to continue to live under this embargo and to endure such a difficult situation.

For all these reasons, we appeal to both parties — the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America — to show common sense and to undertake serious negotiations to resolve this problem as soon as possible. This would contribute to keeping the peace and to restoring trust between the peoples of this region and of the world.

Mrs. Ramírez (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): One year ago, when we considered this item, many delegations echoed the appeal made in the resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba. We also expressed our concern over the fact that measures were under consideration that would further exacerbate the situation.

Today, we must regret not only that this appeal, which has been made by the General Assembly for several years now, has not been heeded, but that the measures intended to curtail Cuba's legitimate right to free trade and to the sovereign conduct of its economic relations are being considered for extension to other nations. As a result of this, the position of the international community today is not just one of solidarity with one nation, but has turned to widespread alarm regarding behaviour that adversely affects the members of the international economic system, which, in this era of globalization, includes all countries.

My country has always been firm in its rejection of any action or provision that contravenes the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, especially that of non-interference in the internal affairs of States. We further believe that, at a time when free access to the international market is so vital to the development opportunities of peoples, it is essential for all nations — particularly those that receive the greatest benefits from globalization — to adhere to the principles of freedom of international navigation and trade.

For this reason, we cannot but regret measures such as those contained in the legislation known as the Helms-Burton Act. Any promulgation of provisions intended to pressure other States, particularly developing States, or attempt to apply rules of domestic law extraterritorially is not only incompatible with international law, but is also part of the new generation of unilateral actions that is one of the most disturbing trends on the world stage today. Such actions are guided by domestic political interests and therefore introduce elements that are incompatible with the overall purpose of achieving a more constructive framework for relations among States.

Actions taken by Member countries of the United Nations must be in line with the principles of the Charter and should be taken through dialogue, the correct mechanism for resolving differences among States. Only through strict respect for international law will it be

possible to attain legitimately the common ideals of the international community.

The Non-Aligned Movement attaches great importance to the issue of unilateral actions and emphatically rejects them. For this reason, it has expressed support in several statements for the principles contained in resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at previous sessions on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

The Eleventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries reiterated the position of the Movement on this issue. The Declaration of Cartagena states that:

> "The Heads of State or Government called upon the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial measures and actions against Cuba which, in addition to being unilateral and contrary to the United Nations Charter and international law, and to the principle of neighbourliness, cause huge material losses and economic damage. They called upon the United States of America to settle its differences with Cuba through negotiations on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and requested strict compliance with resolutions 47/19, 48/16 and 49/9 of the General Assembly of the United Nations. They expressed deep concern about new legislation presented to the Congress of the United States that would intensify the embargo against Cuba and widen its extraterritorial nature." *(A/50/752, para. 183)*

It continues:

> "The Heads of State or Government condemned the fact that certain countries, using their predominant position in the world economy, continue to intensify the adoption of unilateral coercive measures against developing countries, which are in clear contradiction with international law, such as trade restrictions, blockades, embargoes and freezing of assets with the purpose of preventing these countries from exercising their right to fully determine their political, economic and social system and freely expand their international trade. They deemed such measures unacceptable and called for their immediate cessation." *(ibid., para. 237)*

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

For their part the Heads of State or Government of the Rio Group member States, meeting recently at Cochabamba, Bolivia, made the following announcement regarding this issue:

> "We reject any attempt to impose unilateral sanctions of an extraterritorial nature in application of a country's domestic law, as this contravenes the rules governing the coexistence of States and ignores the basic principle of respect for sovereignty, in addition to constituting a violation of international law.
>
> "We therefore reaffirm our vigorous rejection of the so-called Helms-Burton Act and, in that connection, stress the importance of the unanimous view expressed by the Inter-American Juridical Committee of the Organization of American States, which we endorse, to the effect that the bases and the prospective enforcement of that Act are inconsistent with international law." *(A/51/375, annex, p. 4)*

My delegation wishes also to express its concern over the grave humanitarian consequences of these measures on the Cuban people. The effects of these measures on Cuba's ability to resolve its external-debt problem and, in general, to make progress towards achieving a more open and prosperous economy are also cause for special concern.

I therefore wish to express Colombia's support for the draft resolution before us, based on our commitment to the principle of respect for international law and to help promote freer, more vigorous and more transparent international trade allowing developing countries to strive for economic and social development. As we stated at the last session of the General Assembly in considering this agenda item, the exercise of free trade and the opportunities derived from it may help put an end to the exercise of many privileges.

We therefore reiterate our appeal for dialogue and negotiation to be the instruments used to resolve the differences existing between the United States and Cuba.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): First of all, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation for the Secretary-General's report, contained

in document A/51/355 dated 13 September 1996, concerning agenda item 27, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

As in previous years, the report now being considered by the General Assembly reproduces replies from Governments, organs and agencies of the United Nations system with regard to agenda item 27. In my delegation's view, it is not a coincidence that all of the 59 responses from Governments and the other reports received from organs and agencies of the United Nations system are in full compliance with the contents of the relevant General Assembly resolution 50/10 of 2 November 1995.

As the Assembly is aware, resolution 50/10 took action for the fourth consecutive year on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. Therefore, by adopting the resolution Member States once again reaffirmed their commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations in general and the principles and norms of international law in particular. It will also be recalled that General Assembly resolutions 47/19 of 24 November 1992, 48/16 of 3 November 1993, and 49/9 of 26 October 1994 all emphasized the need to end the United States embargo on Cuba.

However, despite the adoption of the resolutions referred to above by my delegation, which, it will be recalled, were adopted by an overwhelming majority, there has been no progress towards ending the United States embargo on Cuba. This situation is of grave concern to my delegation.

My delegation remains equally gravely concerned by the recent promulgation and application of the Helms-Burton Act by the United States of America, an Act whose extraterritorial aspects affect the sovereignty of other States, their respective national interests notwithstanding. No doubt the Helms-Burton Act is aimed at strengthening and internationalizing the United States blockade against Cuba — a blockade that has been in force for more than three decades now.

Such an exercise, by all standards, is relatively excessive, and as a matter of fact is contrary to the principles of international law and understanding, as it propagates and justifies the extraterritorial jurisdiction of one State over another.

The Helms-Burton Act does not affect only Cuba. It also establishes sanctions of various types against countries that trade with and/or invest in Cuba. In all fairness, this attempt by a State to compel citizens of a third State to obey the legislation of another State is in complete violation of the principles and norms of international law and what it stands for. In my delegation's view, that law, which has been rejected worldwide, is not helpful for creating conditions that can lead to easing tensions between the two countries. On the contrary, it is contributing to worsening the situation.

Tanzania enjoys very friendly relations with both the United States of America and Cuba and therefore remains hopeful that the differences between the two neighbouring countries will be resolved in an amicable way through bilateral negotiations, as demonstrated in the past.

It is against this backdrop that Tanzania supports and will vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Assembly.

Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe): My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Assembly is meeting for the fifth consecutive year to consider the item before us. It is also the fifth year in which the Government of Cuba is appealing to the international community to assist in ending this abominable embargo, which is deliberately designed to strangle its economy. My Government is dismayed that we have no solutions to offer the Cuban people today, but are here to take action on the same draft resolution yet again.

My delegation has on numerous occasions called for an end to the embargo that has crippled the Cuban economy and, as members heard from the Secretary of the Council of Ministers of Cuba, cruelly endangered the lives of many innocent people, including children, the sick and the elderly, who have had to bear the brunt of untold suffering. In this post-cold-war era, in which adherence to the basic norms of international law and of peaceful coexistence among sovereign and independent nations is being preached, is it not ironic that we are grappling with the most basic breach of these norms?

What has become even more disturbing in recent years is the extraterritorial character and impact of the blockade. One powerful country continues to enact

legislation that borders on interference with sovereign States' freedom of international trade and navigation. It is wrong for one Member State to assign itself the role of international policeman by taking a course of action that is the responsibility of the United Nations. Since the United Nations has not seen fit or necessary to take such action against Cuba, all countries should be able fully to enjoy their economic, commercial and financial transactions with Cuba. The mere fact that one country stands isolated on this matter should be a clear indication that the international community will no longer tolerate such interference.

It is our firm conviction that no one country has the right to present a form of governance to any given people. It is the democratic right of that people to make their own choice. We, like other Non-Aligned Movement member States, are guided by the Movement's declaration on the occasion of its 35th anniversary, on 24 September 1996, which called on the

> "international community to resist all new modalities of intervention, economic coercion and other measures of extraterritorial character".

It is also in the light of these developments that my delegation fervently hopes that constructive dialogue will take the place of the adversity that exists between the two countries, in the spirit of the post-cold-war openness to dialogue.

My delegation will take its consistent position of voting in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): My delegation fully supports the statement made by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Since 1992, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions on the "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". Resolution 50/10, among others, reiterates this call. It is therefore with concern that my delegation notes the promulgation of yet another law, the Helms-Burton Act, which not only strengthens the existing blockade but gives it an international character. We are disheartened that not a single measure has been taken towards breaking through the wall of deprivation and isolation that has surrounded Cuba for so long.

The Helms-Burton Act is a blatant violation of the sovereignty of States, a serious breach of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and freedom of trade and navigation, and is a violation of the rules of the international trade system. It can have no place in an increasingly globalized and liberalized economic system.

Furthermore, the broad response from States Members of the United Nations on the implementation of resolution 50/10 of 2 November 1995, contained in document A/51/355, accentuates, among other things, the invalidity of the application of measures with extraterritorial effects. Suffice it to mention also that the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77 and China, of which Namibia is a proud member, have rejected the Helms-Burton Act.

The Helms-Burton Act, among other things, penalizes third-country companies trafficking in nationalized United States properties, as well as their executives and families. The law provides for the withholding of United States contributions to international financial organizations that render assistance to Cuba and sanctions Governments depending on their type of economic and trade relations with Cuba. Furthermore, the objectives of some provisions are aimed directly against foreign investment in Cuba, which has been experiencing positive signs as a result of policy reform to attract foreign capital into Cuba.

The Helms-Burton Act also calls for an annual report that would describe all bilateral assistance provided to Cuba by other countries, including humanitarian assistance; Cuban debt to third countries, as well as the amount exchanged, forgiven or reduced; identification of Cuban trading partners; and a description of the joint ventures completed or under consideration by foreign nationals and business firms.

How can we welcome the opportunities stemming from the newly established World Trade Organization when we are limiting freedom of trade?

The adverse effects on the population of Cuba cannot be over-emphasized. We note with concern the response by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) contained in document A/51/355. The high levels of education and health enjoyed by children, women and local communities are being jeopardized by the shortage of medical and other related materials. We would, however, commend the Government and people of Cuba for having ensured that, notwithstanding the blockade, Cuba still has the lowest infant mortality rate in Latin America and the Caribbean region — 8 per 1,000

live births. How much could be achieved when the blockade is finally lifted?

It is in this context that we welcome the United Nations system's attempts and efforts to minimize the adverse effects of this long-standing embargo by, among other things, lessening the isolation of Cuba resulting from the blockade and by supporting the consolidation of social sectors such as education, health, food security, water and sanitation. Thus, Namibia hopes that the donor conference held in Havana to mobilize support for the water and sanitation sector will contribute to the provision of those services. In this regard, we call on Member States to support the activities of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

It is commendable that, despite the blockade, Cuba has not failed to extend a hand of friendship and solidarity to others most in need. We refer here to the assistance we received from the Government of Cuba during the difficult years of our struggle for self-determination and national independence. Today, we have hundreds of doctors, engineers and other professionals who have been educated and trained in Cuba and who are successfully contributing to our national reconstruction process.

Time and again, and from this very rostrum, Namibia has reiterated the need to end the blockade against Cuba. In his address to the forty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, the Honourable Theo-Ben Gurirab, stated that Namibia was very much encouraged by the conclusion of an agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America on immigration issues. We hoped then that the signing of that agreement would serve as the beginning of serious negotiations to resolve all aspects of the long-standing dispute between them in the interest of peace, trade, development and good neighbourliness. Since then, Namibia has repeatedly made that same plea. Needless to say, the Helms-Burton Act has dampened our hopes.

Namibia enjoys excellent, friendly relations with both countries. It is in this spirit that we shall continue to advocate rapprochement between Cuba and the United States of America. It is in this context that Namibia will vote in favour of the draft resolution (A/51/L.15).

As we enter a new millennium, the necessity of ending the United States economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba becomes imperative. Just as we pledged during the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations to give to the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established, so too must we ensure that no one is left behind in deliberate suffering and deprivation. Together, we owe the children of Cuba a happy childhood. The lifting of the blockade will provide just that. Do it for their sake.

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, unless I hear any objection, I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item now be closed.

It was so decided.

Mr. Gumbi (South Africa): South Africa wishes to register its gratitude for this opportunity to articulate once more its views on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States of America against Cuba.

South Africa is a sovereign and independent State and as such, since 1994, it has established diplomatic and economic relations with many countries, including Cuba. It is therefore natural that the South African business community, like its counterparts in other countries in the world, is nurturing trade and joint ventures with Cuba.

The economic embargo against Cuba is a product of the cold war and is a painful reminder of the continuous suffering of innocent men, women and children because of this policy. In the aftermath of the cold war era, Member States should strive to expend their energies in encouraging and promoting policies of good neighbourliness and of free and unhindered engagement in the global economy.

South Africa adheres to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and ascribes, among other principles, to the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs, and freedom of international trade and navigation.

In maintaining and upholding the friendly, diplomatic and economic relations which South Africa has with Cuba, we do not wish to subscribe to or entertain laws, regulations or measures that would affect the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of

entities or persons under their jurisdiction, as well as the freedom of trade and navigation. In this regard, South Africa opposes the extraterritorial application of national laws beyond the borders of any sovereign State.

South Africa wishes to express concern about the additional measures aimed at strengthening and extending the embargo not only against Cuba but also against third States and their nationals who conduct or intend to conduct business with Cuba. In our view, measures such as the Helms-Burton Act fly not only in the face of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the freedom of trade and navigation, but also violate the rules of the multilateral trading system.

In conclusion, South Africa hopes that a process of amicable, open and constructive dialogue between the relevant parties will necessitate the removal of this relic of cold war days from the agenda of the General Assembly in due course.

Ms. Durrant (Jamaica): The agenda item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" is once again before the General Assembly for consideration.

In his statement during the recent general debate, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jamaica, the Honourable Seymour Mullings, recalled the commitment of the countries of the Caribbean to maintaining a climate free of tension and confrontation in our region. He further stated that

> "We seek the normalization of relations, which will reduce the atmosphere of uncertainty and the dangers of confrontation in the region. We seek this in an atmosphere of respect for sovereign rights and a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes. We reject the extraterritorial application of national legislation, which is inconsistent with international law." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 17th meeting, p. 16)*

In this regard, Jamaica continues to hope that the parties most directly involved will find a way to resolve the problems which the draft resolution before us seeks to address. Jamaica will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.15.

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh (Viet Nam): Again this year — for the fifth consecutive year — the General Assembly is considering the agenda item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

At the heart of the consideration of this agenda item is a question of principle: the question of upholding the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Among the most important principles that guide this Organization and govern international relations are the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. States, large or small, are all thus equally endowed with the inherent right to self-determination and independence, being free to choose the path of their development and to determine their future and destiny.

Last year the General Assembly, by resolution 50/10, further reaffirmed last year those most fundamental principles, as it had done in its previous resolutions adopted under this agenda item. It rejected the continued and strengthened economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. It expressed concern at the nature of this embargo, which extends national laws and regulations extraterritorially and affects the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, as well as the freedom of trade and navigation.

Worldwide solidarity and sympathy have been extended to Cuba and the Cuban people, who are undergoing serious hardships as a result of the embargo.

The consideration of this agenda item concerns not only the single case in point. For the United Nations and the international community, the rejection of the embargo has wider scope and international significance. A clear message is that no embargo of this kind should ever be allowed to be imposed on any State because it violates the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Grave concerns have been expressed that despite the worldwide call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, this embargo not only continues but has been further strengthened and extended since the Helms-Burton Act was promulgated in March this year. The tightened measures under this Act have caused further difficulties in the daily life of the Cuban people and in their economic development, and

have sought to impede the normal trade relations of other countries with Cuba. A great number of countries, including Viet Nam, have expressed their views on this question in their responses to resolution 50/10, as contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/355 and Add.1).

Viet Nam shares the conviction that extraterritorial laws and regulations not only run counter to the principles of international law, especially the respect of the sovereignty of States, but also adversely affect the freedom of trade and navigation and the promotion of good relations among States for cooperation and development on the basis of sovereign equality and non-discrimination.

We join the call for the immediate end to the long-imposed embargo against Cuba and continue to believe that differences and disputes between countries should be settled through dialogue and negotiations. We appreciate and call further for continued assistance by the international community and the agencies of the United Nations to the Cuban people. Effective measures should be taken to ensure the implementation of the resolutions of the General Assembly under this item and recommendations to this effect should be included in the next report of the Secretary-General.

We further express our sympathy to the Cuban people. We once again reaffirm our solidarity. We have rendered and will continue to render our support to this country and people in their cause for national development and in building a prosperous country.

Mr. Marrero (United States): The peoples of the western hemisphere may be proud that our region consists almost entirely of free societies, where the power of government flows from the people, not from coercion or the barrel of a gun. Out of 35 nations, 34 have Governments that govern in accordance with the democratic principles referenced in the Charter of the United Nations and spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Only one nation — Cuba — is ruled by a regime that clings to the discredited, dictatorial habits of the past, ignoring the hopes of its own people, the course of history and internationally recognized standards of human rights. By introducing this draft resolution in the United Nations General Assembly, Cuba has manipulated the concerns of countries around the world to claim support for its reprehensible policies of intolerance and oppression.

The United States has the right — as does every nation — to choose with whom it trades, to protect the property rights of its own citizens, and to pursue its national interests. The Cuban regime withholds fundamental freedoms and human rights from its citizens, for which it has been rightly condemned by this body and by the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

To address these concerns, my Government continues to believe strongly that the embargo provides important leverage to promote peaceful change in Cuba. In addition, our policy towards Cuba also includes the important element of direct support for the Cuban people. This effort is aimed at supporting Cuban human rights organizations, and other non-governmental organizations working to better the lives of average Cubans.

We can and do permit travel to Cuba for research, news-gathering, cultural, educational, religious or human rights purposes. The United States licensed nearly $140 million in humanitarian assistance to Cuba over the past four years, and I can assure you that our efforts to better the lives of the Cuban people will continue.

My Government is committed to pursuing a multilateral approach to promote a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. That effort should be the focus of our discussions, not this annual hollow and sterile consideration of this confrontational and groundless agenda item. Let us instead insist upon the need for peaceful democratic change in Cuba now. That is an effort worthy of this chamber.

Mr. Azwai (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The United States of America has imposed an economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba for more than 30 years. Since this item was inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly, the Member States have expressed their positions on it. Many have hoped that the United States would respond to the repeated appeals and lift the embargo against the Cuban people, but the response has been completely different.

Not only have the calls contained in various General Assembly resolutions been ignored, but the embargo has been further tightened and its scope expanded to the extent that its consequences now infringe on the sovereignty of other States that have economic relations with Cuba. This reflects a disrespect for the will of the international community as expressed in several resolutions, the latest of which is resolution 50/10. This position confirms that the United States is persisting in its orientation of dictating to countries of the world specific

types of conduct and the sort of relations that countries establish with each other.

The unilateral anti-Cuban economic legislation has negatively affected the efforts of the Cuban people to achieve economic and social development. The embargo has resulted in higher prices for essential materials, a shortage of medicines, and limited access to components needed for the manufacture of medical supplies, in addition to exclusion from the benefits of technical and scientific advances. The practices that led to all of this are not only a flagrant violation of human rights but an attack on free trade and the respect of the principles of international law and the conventions governing relations among States. It is also another confirmation of a policy based on trying to blockade and starve peoples and extraterritorial conduct that attempts to impose sanctions on persons and companies from other countries to prevent them from dealing with Cuba.

The majority of the members of the international community have expressed their opinions on the economic embargo imposed against Cuba. Regrettably, that embargo, though increasingly criticized by world public opinion, has been tightened. The Helms-Burton bill of last year is now an enforceable Act, pursuant to which various sanctions have been imposed on countries that decide, in exercise of their sovereignty, to cooperate with Cuba or invest in it. The United States has advanced many arguments to justify both the embargo and its tightening, including the claim that Cuba constitutes a threat to international peace and security. This is a flimsy and false argument. The fact is that United States practices towards Cuba can only be explained as interference in the international affairs of that country, the economic suffocation of its people, and an attempt to undermine Cuba's relations with other countries.

The use of embargoes as a means of solving differences among States is unacceptable and has been rejected by the international community on various levels and in different forums. Despite this, the method of imposing sanctions that the United States insists on following in its dealings with Cuba is also applied against other countries, including mine. My country has been subjected for more than a decade to unilateral United States sanctions, including the freezing of assets, barring Libyan students from access to post-graduate studies in United States universities, and preventing American companies from dealing with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. The argument advanced here was that Libya threatens United States national security. This is a false and indeed laughable allegation. Libya did not freeze United States money and never blockaded United States coasts or bombed its cities. Moreover, Libya has never hatched any plots against United States administrations or done anything that would jeopardize anybody, let alone the fact that the most powerful country in the world is thousands of miles away from it. Such conduct can only be explained as a punishment of the Libyan people for rejecting the policy of hegemony and the attempts to bring them to their knees and for deciding to live free in their land under the sun.

Sanctions are not the right means and will never be the right way to settle disputes among States. Resorting to them only adds to the suffering of children, women, the elderly and other vulnerable groups in any society, be it in Libya, Cuba or other countries subjected to these sanctions. The international community has devised the best methodology for the settlement of disputes among States, namely dialogue and negotiation. This is the method that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has invoked in the settlement of its dispute with the United States. The Cuban Government has also invoked the use of this method to resolve its differences with the United States.

It is not in the interest of Libya, Cuba or any developing country to antagonize the United States for the sake of it. All these countries call for is the settlement of problems by peaceful means as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations and other international norms and conventions. We hope that the United States will respond to this wish and settle its differences with Libya and Cuba and other countries through dialogue because we believe that this is the best way to solve problems. In addition, such a solution would serve the interests of all peoples, whether in the United States, Cuba, Libya or any other country. It would also enhance endeavours to strengthen the basis of constructive international cooperation that can foster relations of cooperation and friendship among States and extend the spirit of confidence and peace of mind to all peoples.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): In previous years my delegation has expressed concern about the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America on Cuba some 35 years ago, which continues to impose hardship on the people of Cuba. Equally disturbing is the fact that, after four successive General Assembly resolutions calling for an end to this blockade, the Torricelli act, adopted by the United States in 1992, has been reinforced by the Helms-Burton Act, which has even more devastating consequences for the innocent people of Cuba. The report of the Secretary-

General (A/51/355) outlines the social and economic effects of the blockade on Cuba — especially on the vulnerable group of children and the aged — including its effects on medical supplies, food and allied products.

In conformity with Charter principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, Ghana believes that it is the sovereign right of the people of Cuba to determine their own system of Government and type of socio-economic development. Rather than internal factors being the cause of Cuba's problems, as claimed by the country's adversaries, it is the economic blockade that is the main stumbling block to Cuba's socio-economic development. The very fact of Cuba's continued survival despite so many years of unbridled hostility and blockade testifies to the strength and resilience of that country's political and economic system.

Like so many other States Members of this Organization, Ghana shares the view that the promulgation of domestic laws that have extraterritorial effects is not only inconsistent with the rules and regulations of the World Trade Organization, but is also totally at variance with international law.

With the end of the cold war, all confrontational postures in inter-State relations must give way to cooperation. The Latin American region, like other regions of the world, is currently engaged in cooperative endeavours to strengthen its political and economic institutions. It is therefore the considered view of my country that engaging Cuba in the dynamics of regional cooperation and integration would be a more constructive approach. Accordingly, my delegation expresses the hope that the blockades and mutual exchanges of rhetoric will give way to a new era of dialogue and mutual respect in tune with current trends in international relations.

Mr. Hasan (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Since its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly has been considering the item entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". Every year it has adopted a resolution reaffirming the call on all States to refrain from promulgating laws and regulations the extraterritorial effects of which affect the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and the freedom of trade and navigation.

The international community had expected a positive United States response to its requests contained in several General Assembly resolutions, the most recent being resolution 50/10. Yet the United States moved in the opposite direction. It tightened its economic embargo against Cuba with the promulgation of the Helms-Burton Act, which, in its infringement of the principles of the sovereign equality of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, has gone beyond previous United States laws against Cuba.

The latest law includes measures that encroach upon the sovereignty of third countries that deal with the Republic of Cuba. This is inevitably a cause of extreme concern to Member States. The United States embargo against Cuba was aimed at forcing the Cuban people to abandon their social, economic and political choices; the Helms-Burton Act makes explicit reference to this. It goes so far as to stipulate that an acceptable Cuban Government is "a government that ... does not include Fidel Castro or Raúl Castro".

This is at variance with numerous international instruments, including the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, adopted by the General Assembly on 24 October 1970, which states that

> "No State may use or encourage the use of economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights and to secure from it advantages of any kind." (*resolution 2625 (XXV), annex, para. 1*)

On another level, this blockade, which has continued for more than 35 years, constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law, because it has led to unimaginable human suffering among the Cuban civilian population by imposing restrictions on the sovereign right of Cuba to develop economic relations with other countries. This has had a negative effect on the socio-economic development of Cuba, and has resulted in a constant deterioration of living conditions and the health and cultural situation of the Cuban people, and in an increase in disease.

These events make it clear that coercive economic measures are no less devastating in their effects than weapons of mass destruction. The only difference is the time each weapon needs to achieve mass destruction. It is abundantly clear to all that the United States economic embargo against Cuba, and its intensification by the

Helms-Burton Act, has no support in international law. The State Department of the United States itself described the latest legislation as indefensible. The President of the United States himself admitted that

> "Nobody in the world agrees with our policy on Cuba now". *(Presidential debate, 6 October 1996)*

It is our great hope that the United States will respond to the call of the international community, as represented in the General Assembly, and will cease its embargo against Cuba and end its support for economic embargo in any form imposed unilaterally or collectively against developing countries. Experience has shown that economic sanctions are an inhumane tool whose efficacy is not proven. To the contrary, it is abundantly clear that they have devastating effects on innocent civilian populations.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): When the cold war ended and a new environment of inter-State relations emerged, the international community fervently hoped that the outstanding international issues left over from the cold-war period would be solved through negotiations and cooperation. This hope has been fulfilled in many regions of the world, where adversarial relations have been replaced by amicable negotiations and cooperation, which has led to the settlement of many disputes. Despite this encouraging trend in international relations, the issue of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba persists, and regrettably remains as intractable as ever. The embargo has even been stepped up through legislative measures which have extraterritorial effects, in disregard of international public opinion.

The embargo has lasted more than three decades, and its declared objective of encouraging political and economic reforms in the Republic of Cuba is far from being realized. It has only damaged the economy of Cuba and has prevented it from being reintegrated into the world economy. As a consequence, the innocent people of Cuba have unjustly suffered innumerable hardships.

The General Assembly has addressed this issue over the last four years and has adopted four resolutions, the last of which was resolution 50/10. That resolution was adopted by a vote of 117 in favour, 3 against and 38 abstentions. It expressed concern at the strengthening and extension of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. Despite the adoption of that resolution, the collective wish of the international community was trivialized by the further tightening of the embargo through the adoption of the Helms-Burton Act. The new law, like its predecessors, not only affects the economic life of the Republic of Cuba and its people but also undermines the sovereignty of third States and violates principles of international law. The nature and scope of the new law has been severely criticized by many countries and groups of countries.

As a matter of policy, Myanmar consistently complies with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and maintains a policy of scrupulous respect for, among other principles, the principle of the sovereign equality of States; non-intervention and non-interference in internal affairs; and freedom of trade and international navigation. In line with this policy, Myanmar has not promulgated any laws or regulations with extraterritorial effects. Myanmar does not believe that such laws and regulations will induce the desired change. They will only be counter-productive, as is clearly the case here. A policy of coercion through the extraterritorial extension of a country's domestic law is unacceptable to Myanmar. It is pertinent to recall in this connection what the Foreign Minister of Myanmar stated in the General Assembly on 27 September 1996:

> "We find unacceptable the threat or use of economic sanctions and the extraterritorial application of domestic law to influence policies in developing countries. The use of economic sanctions as a tool of policy is indefensible. It is a flagrant breach of the United Nations Charter". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 13th meeting, p. 17)*

My delegation holds the view that negotiations between the parties concerned on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect is the only effective and sensible policy leading towards the settlement of this cold-war legacy.

Mr. Bin Nayan (Malaysia): The issue for the General Assembly to reflect on as it considers agenda item 27 is whether a State is permitted under international law to take punitive unilateral trade measures or use undemocratic means to induce political and social reforms in another State. The Assembly is again invited to ponder whether the principle of non-intervention has lost its meaning as we approach a new millennium. If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, then the United Nations has been truly deformed — possibly beyond reform.

Malaysia firmly believes that there is no justification for the United States to take unilateral trade measures

against Cuba that also impinge on the right of other States to engage freely in international trade and navigation. The promulgation of the Helms-Burton Act by the United States clearly contravenes the principles and objectives of the World Trade Organization (WTO). There have been various declarations and resolutions of against the application by the United States of the Act. The declaration of the recent Harare summit meeting of the Group of 15 developing countries, expressing serious concerns about the enactment of national legislation and other unilateral measures having extraterritorial effects, stated that

> "These measures violate the accepted norms of international law and constitute a serious threat to the sovereignty of nations. The future of the world trading system, the legitimacy of the WTO and the prosperity of both developing and developed countries depend on the respect by all nations for established principles and rules of international jurisprudence. We share the international community's firm condemnation of these developments and urge all countries to refrain from such practices".

The application of a United States domestic law whose extraterritorial effects infringe upon the sovereignty and legitimate interests of other States is inconsistent with the intentions of the Charter. Furthermore, the continuing measures against Cuba, contrary to the letter and spirit of General Assembly resolutions, are most definitely incompatible with the position and stature of a permanent member of the Security Council In the absence of any move by the United States to repeal the relevant Act, Member States may be justified in concluding that the United States has adopted a negative attitude by ignoring the will and expressed wishes of members of the General Assembly.

In the interest of upholding the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter and of promoting free trade, Malaysia will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Shah (India): India's position on agenda item 27, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", has not wavered during the past four sessions when the General Assembly has considered draft resolutions on this issue. Hence, I will be brief.

India opposes any unilateral measures by one country that impinge on the sovereignty of another country. This includes any attempt to extend the application of a country's laws extraterritorially to other sovereign nations.

Mr. Fernández Estigarribia (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The efforts of developing countries in carrying out trade and macroeconomic reforms aimed at sustained economic growth can be impeded by the use of unilateral actions by major economies, in particular those with extraterritorial effects. The use of such unilateral trade measures to achieve domestic objectives poses a danger to the multilateral trading system.

The just-concluded Harare summit of the Group of 15 developing countries expressed serious concern over the recent enactment of national legislation and other unilateral measures having extraterritorial effects. The Summit participants held that such measures violate the accepted norms of international law and constitute a serious threat to the sovereignty of nations.

We too believe that the unilateral application of national legislation or laws in third countries should be resisted. Consistent with my Government's position, my delegation supports the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.15.

We also call upon the United States of America to settle all its differences with Cuba through negotiations on the basis of equality and mutual respect. We believe that there is great merit in this approach.

Mr. Whannou (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): For more than 30 years, the brother people of Cuba has been subjected to a unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo. The primary consequence of this unilateral measure has been the extreme impoverishment of the Cuban people, the subsequent deterioration in its living conditions, and, hence, increased suffering.

Such a situation, caused by unilateral measures not in keeping with the friendly relations, cooperation and good-neighbourliness that should exist between States, cannot leave us indifferent. Indeed, this situation is contrary to the provisions of the United Nations Charter and international law, particularly as regards the freedom of commerce and navigation. This is why, for several years, the General Assembly has consistently adopted — by an increasing majority — resolutions in favour of lifting the unilateral embargo.

My country, Benin, remains committed to respecting the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. Therefore, it has neither promulgated nor applied unilateral measures that impose embargoes against other States. Benin regrets that no measure has been taken since the adoption of resolution 50/10 to lift the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. Concerned about the United States national law known as the Helms-Burton Act, Benin calls on the international community to cooperate with the United Nations to lift this embargo as soon as possible. The embargo is also an impediment to the development of South-South cooperation between Cuba and developing countries in general, and the countries of the Caribbean and of Latin America in particular.

Benin believes that in this post-cold-war period, normalizing United States-Cuban relations would contribute to strengthening peace and improving international political and economic relations. This normalization would undoubtedly facilitate Cuba's integration into the economic globalization process and the liberalization of trade, and would consolidate the democratic process and increase Cuba's openness to the world.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

From the same standpoint, I would like to recall the declaration of this year's conference of the Non-Aligned Movement on the issue of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Benin welcomes the initiatives and measures taken by the organs, foundations, programmes and bodies of the United Nations system, noted in the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/51/355. We therefore support the following recommendations regarding the role of the United Nations system:

> "Supporting the restructuring process of the Cuban economy; contributing to the consolidation and enhancement of social services; [and] promoting cooperation between Cuba and the rest of the world". *(A/51/355, chap. III, para. 16)*

Indeed, by contributing to the achievement of these goals, the United Nations system is seeking above all to mitigate the effects and consequences of the embargo on the Cuban population. I therefore take this opportunity to call solemnly upon the two States involved — Cuba and the United States of America — to seek a solution to this dispute by peaceful means, including through dialogue and negotiation.

Benin expresses its solidarity with the Cuban people, which, due to the embargo, faces additional difficulties in its efforts to emerge from underdevelopment. My delegation, as in the past, will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Mr. Choulkov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The issue of the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba has been in the focus of the General Assembly since 1992. Without going into detail, we would like to recall the essence of the Russian position: we cannot, in principle, agree with attempts to extend the internal jurisdiction of States beyond their own territory. In our view, such actions violate the established, generally-accepted rules of international law and jeopardize the interests of third countries.

In examining the results of voting on resolutions on this item in previous years, we come to the conclusion that the international community increasingly rejects such unilateral coercive measures. Most of the States of the world, including the developed States, have expressed their disagreement with attempts to tighten the embargo by implementing the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, passed last March and known as the Helms-Burton Act. They have rightly described it as discriminatory and as incompatible with the norms of international law and the principles of free trade.

The Russian delegation believes that attempts to blockade Cuba economically through an embargo are counterproductive, and can only worsen the situation of the majority of the country's population and impede incipient democratic change and economic reform. In our view, the lifting the United States commercial, economic and financial embargo against Cuba and the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba would promote a healthier international situation and facilitate Cuba's integration into world economic relations and thereby the advance of its society towards democracy and greater openness.

The Russian delegation believes that mutually acceptable decisions to normalize the entire range of Cuban-United States relations are both desirable and feasible. They should be sought through a constructive

bilateral dialogue and a broader negotiating process between the two countries.

Russia, firmly guided by the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of trade and international navigation, supports and intends to broaden normal economic and commercial ties with Cuba, based on mutual interest and reciprocal advantage, and to put them into effect in strict conformity with generally accepted international norms.

Mr. Escovar Salom (Venezuela)(*interpretation from Spanish*): In recent years, the international community has made significant progress in the area of economic and commercial cooperation through dialogue and direct negotiation. It has also made very important progress towards universal peace, democracy and solidarity.

Any discriminatory trade practice, imposition of unilateral economic measures or extraterritorial application of domestic law obstructs that process and is unacceptable and incompatible with the norms of international law and the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. It is impossible to conceive of a just international order in the social and economic spheres which that includes trade, economic and financial restrictions imposed by one State on another. It is inadmissible to seek solutions to bilateral political differences through military or economic coercion or through any other form of pressure that undermines the sovereignty and independence of nations and harms the well-being of peoples.

The adoption of such measures does not contribute in any way to the resolution of differences; on the contrary, it encourages unnecessary confrontation that affects the population without changing the system against which they are imposed. My Government rejects measures of that type and believes that the embargo against Cuba must be lifted.

In this regard, I wish to reiterate Venezuela's unwavering position, as expressed at several international forums, rejecting the promulgation of unilateral measures whose extraterritorial effects are prejudicial to the sovereign exercise of the laws and interests of other States. For that reason, we express our concern over the enactment of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, known as the Helms-Burton legislation, and stress the importance of the unanimous opinion issued by the Inter-American Legal Committee of the Organization of American States to the effect that the grounds and possible application of that Act are not in keeping with international law.

Based on these considerations, we have decided to vote in favour of the draft resolution before us. That, however, should not be interpreted as support by the Government of Venezuela for a particular political regime, since we consider that the arguments made against the embargo are valid regardless of a country's political situation.

I wish to affirm in the most categorical terms the conviction and position of my country's policy in favour of ensuring, developing and encouraging the democratic processes in Latin America and throughout the world. Heads of State or Government and Prime Ministers are now meeting at Viña del Mar in Chile at a summit that is very important to the development of democracy in Latin America and our President and Government have expressed there Venezuela's unwavering position favouring the development and further strengthening of democratic Governments. The promotion of democracy, which is set down in our Constitution, cannot be associated with unilateral coercive measures of indefinite duration.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/51/L.15.

I shall now call on the representative of Ireland, who wishes to make a statement in explanation of vote on behalf of the European Union. May I remind him that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): The European Union strongly believes that a democratic system of government must be installed in Cuba as a matter of priority. However, we also believe that that must come about through internal change, encouraged by dialogue with the Cuban Government and by effective support for those working for democracy within Cuba. The Cuban Government continues to cling to an outmoded and misguided system of government which has been firmly rejected in most parts of the world. We consider that Cuba must join the evolution towards democracy and pluralism which has been so evident elsewhere in Latin America.

The year since the General Assembly last considered the question of the embargo against Cuba has been characterized by increasing violations of civil and political

rights by the Government of Cuba. We have witnessed the banning of the democracy-building efforts of Concilio Cubano. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights has provided details of the harassment experienced by those who seek to bring democracy to Cuba by peaceful means. We have also seen the shooting down of the two Hermanos al Rescate aircraft, in violation of international law and with complete disregard for the right to life.

The European Union attaches paramount importance to the need for the Government of Cuba to accord absolute respect to human rights and fundamental freedoms. We condemn unreservedly the repeated violations of human rights that have occurred over the years in Cuba, with particular emphasis at the present time on violations of civil and political rights.

We are also concerned that the Cuban people continue to experience a decline in the level of economic and social rights that they have enjoyed. While this is due in part to the effects of the United States embargo on the Cuban population, the Cuban Government must accept a part of the blame for the difficult situation faced by the Cuban people. Over the years, the Government has made economic and political choices that may have produced short-term benefits but that now have the most serious consequences for the welfare of the Cuban population.

We welcome decisions by the Cuban Government to undertake a process of economic reform, which we hope will enable the country to move towards a more rational economic system and bring with it tangible benefits for the Cuban people. We call for further economic liberalization.

Having made clear our views on the situation that exists in Cuba, the European Union wishes to reiterate its rejection of attempts to apply national legislation on an extraterritorial basis. We have always rejected attempts by the United States to coerce other countries into complying with the commercial measures it has adopted unilaterally against Cuba.

For this reason, we continue to oppose United States legislation that provides for the application of United States law to companies and individuals outside the jurisdiction of the United States, including provisions designed to discourage third- country companies from trading with, or investing in, Cuba. We cannot accept that the United States may unilaterally determine or restrict the European Union's economic and commercial relations with any other State. Measures of this type violate the general principles of international law and the sovereignty of independent States.

The European Union has therefore initiated proceedings in the World Trade Organization to have the Helms-Burton legislation declared contrary to the obligations assumed by the United States as a member of that organization. The European Union has also agreed upon legislation to counter the extraterritorial effects of the United States measures.

Bearing in mind the concerns and reasons we have outlined, the members of the European Union will support this draft resolution.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.15.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakstan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa,

Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against: Israel, United States of America, Uzbekistan

Abstaining: Bhutan, El Salvador, Estonia, Gabon, Georgia, Guatemala, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Morocco, Nepal, Oman, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Arab Emirates

The draft resolution was adopted by 137 votes to 3, with 25 abstentions (resolution 51/17).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Cameroon and Niger advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution]

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to make statements in explanation of vote. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): This is the second year that Argentina has voted in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.15. This is because our principal objective, in addressing the question of Cuba, is to help in that country's peaceful transition towards democracy, within the framework of the principles of the Charter and of international law. This objective is no doubt shared by all peoples of the hemisphere as well as by a vast majority of the membership of the General Assembly. This objective was recently underscored at the Ibero-American Summit Conference, which took place in Santiago, Chile, last weekend.

The measures referred to in the resolution we have just adopted do nothing to help us attain this objective. On the contrary, we are convinced that not only will they not have the effect we desire, namely democracy, neither will they serve to isolate Cuba from the international community — a goal that we do not share. Furthermore, the blockades, embargoes and trade sanctions referred to in the resolution are contrary to the principles and practices of the United Nations and are inconsistent with international law.

We have respectfully included the question of democracy in this debate because we do not think that any sustainable economic recovery is viable without a pluralistic and representative institutional framework or clear respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The incremental measures contained in the Helms-Burton Act do not contribute to democratic transition in Cuba, nor do they make any real contribution to opening up the economy. For all of these reasons, and since our main objective is democracy, we voted in favour of the draft resolution.

In conclusion, we wish to give the Assembly something to think on. If we truly wish to see democracy in Cuba, we should also promote integration, communications and cultural exchanges, as well as strengthen measures that the Government of Cuba has already put in place to open up the economy. In other words, if democracy is the goal, we need to see fewer fruitless, coercive policies, which further impoverish people who do not deserve it, and more of the 1975 Helsinki spirit, which gave rise to a liberation movement in Europe that culminated in the end of totalitarianism. We therefore want to see measures appropriate to today's post-cold-war world because we believe them to be more effective, more realistic, more acceptable and more conducive to democracy.

Mr. Karsgaard (Canada): Canada has supported this resolution again this year. We have done so because we contest any effort to force change in our own policy through the use of measures having an extraterritorial reach. Canada has always taken a vigorous stand against measures that seek to constrain the freedom of investment and trade of third countries. That is our primary concern with the embargo and the reason why Canada has opposed the Helms-Burton Act.

At the same time, and as we have said in the past, the embargo cannot be blamed for all of Cuba's problems. We believe that Cuba can overcome many of its problems through a concerted programme of political and economic reform. We have seen progress in the economic area, but Canada remains concerned at the state of human rights and democratic development in Cuba, which falls short of internationally recognized norms; we will continue to press for improvement. We do not agree with Cuba on all issues, but we continue to believe that

engagement and dialogue rather than isolation is the best way of encouraging reform in Cuba.

Ms. Lee (Singapore): Singapore has once again voted in support of the resolution on this issue (A/51/L.15) which we have just adopted. In doing so, we still take no position on the specific bilateral problems that led to the imposition of the embargo against Cuba. This is a matter for the two countries to settle bilaterally. However, we maintain our view that international relations have evolved to the point where the principle of free trade should be the primary consideration for the international community. Sanctions should be used only in extremely serious cases and then only on the authority of the Security Council. The unilateral imposition of sanctions with extraterritorial applications is a dangerous trend that will distort free trade to the ultimate detriment of the entire international community.

All nations should be able to trade freely and openly with any other nation regardless of political views. Openness and engagement is the best way to build a true community of nations.

Mr. Takahashi (Japan): I have asked to speak to place on record Japan's position with regard to its abstention in the voting on the resolution contained in document A/51/L.15. As it has indicated in previous years, Japan considers that the question of the United States embargo against Cuba should be discussed bilaterally between the United States and Cuba. It continues to have doubts as to whether a discussion in the General Assembly can actually be conducive to resolving the issue in a constructive way. At the same time, Japan joins the international community in expressing its concern that the Helms-Burton Act may constitute an extraterritorial application, and asks for cautious implementation of the law.

Japan is not entirely convinced that the resolution that has just been adopted properly addresses the question in all its complexity. If it does not, a better way must be found to reach an appropriate solution. Otherwise this question will remain unresolved.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): The issue of the American embargo against Cuba has been around for more than 37 years. This means that the origins of the issue date back to the politics of the cold war, characterized by global tension and East-West ideological rivalry.

The continuation of the embargo against Cuba is therefore a sad continuation of cold-war tactics in a different era altogether. The post-cold-war era is a period that should be characterized by reconciliation and cooperation among States. It is an era in which nations are increasingly turning to diplomacy and peaceful means to solve disputes among them. Unfortunately, the United States chooses to live in the past in its relations with Cuba.

It must be noted that in spite of the embargo, the Cuban people have stood firm and resolute in the face of the situation brought about by this uncalled for campaign of external pressure. My delegation applauds the Cuban people for their tenacity: despite overwhelming external pressure, they have solidly remained behind their tested leadership. We also applaud them for having such a resilient economy. Despite its dramatic decline in 1992, at the height of the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the economy is once again on the road to recovery.

Today, Cuba enjoys economic cooperation with several countries. Cuba has experienced increased private investment over the past few years, which has given a boost to its economy. It also enjoys a booming tourist industry that is the envy of many countries. The truth of the matter is that Cuba's economy is recovering rapidly, following its drastic decline in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Consequently, Cuba enjoys both political and social stability. This phenomenon must be strengthened by putting an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba.

It therefore came as a total surprise that at a time when Cuba is registering a recovery in its economy, the United States saw fit to strengthen its economic blockade against it. This was done through the Helms-Burton Act, which has been roundly condemned by the international community. The Act has been dismissed as an attempt to impose unilateral sanctions of an extraterritorial nature in the application of a country's domestic law. It clearly infringes upon the norms that govern coexistence between States and ignores with impunity the fundamental principle of sovereignty; besides, it constitutes a violation of international law.

The United States of America is, to all intents and purposes, alone in its advocacy and application of the Helms-Burton law against Cuba. Hence, instead of isolating Cuba, the United States has succeeded only in doing the opposite. To be sure, Washington has greatly isolated itself on this issue. More and more countries

affected by that law are now fighting against it. They are not fighting against Cuba but alongside it.

The Helms-Burton Act is simply self-defeating. It is as controversial as it is unworkable; it is futile and an illegitimate form of pressure on the Government and people of Cuba.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, for its part, has on several occasions underscored the need to end the American embargo against Cuba. My delegation therefore wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate the call made to the United States by the Heads of State or Government of the Movement at Cartagena, Colombia, last year, to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial measures against Cuba.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that these measures — apart from being unilateral and contrary to the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as to the principles of good neighbourliness — cause huge and unnecessary material losses and economic damage to all the countries affected by the law. Those, incidentally, include the United States itself.

The time has come for the United States to see Cuba for what it is: a country determined more than ever before to develop along the path that has been charted by its leaders. The time has also come for the United States to appreciate the fact that the past four years have demonstrated the total rejection by the international community of the application of unilateral and extraterritorial measures by the United States.

In the light of the mounting public opinion against the United States embargo against Cuba, my delegation wishes to urge the United States Government to settle its differences with Cuba through negotiations, on the basis of equality and mutual respect. It is indeed in this light that my delegation has supported the resolution before us.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): My delegation wishes to make the following statement in explanation of vote.

All nations are equal before the eyes of God. Even if geographically they are small States, to God they are all equal. No nation, therefore, whether large or small, has a divine right to interfere in the sovereignty of any State Member of the United Nations.

The Kingdom of Swaziland, in this belief, will therefore continue to support efforts aimed at discouraging bigger countries from frustrating the development of small nations such as the Kingdom of Swaziland.

For this reason, we cannot close the door on the two parties involved in this issue. We must see that they continue to negotiate, and try to soften their hearts to make them fear God, who created them both.

This is the time for the Security Council which, I believe, has the power of the veto, to use it to come to the aid of small nations when they are being unnecessarily victimized.

Let us continue to hope and pray that sanity among nations will continue to prevail in order to respect the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): My country believes that the settlement of disputes among States must be undertaken, first of all, through peaceful means. Any other forceful measures, such as sanctions or embargoes, constitute exceptions to this general rule. They should be resorted to only when all other means are exhausted and, in any case, should be firmly based on international law.

Sanctions and embargoes that contradict international law instead of contributing to the solution of a specific dispute only escalate tensions. If they affect the interests of third parties, as in the case currently under the scrutiny of the General Assembly, it is even more appropriate that the international community express its rejection.

The so-called Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996, in force in the United States of America, has been rejected in a number of international forums, *inter alia*, in the Organization of American States, the Rio Group and at the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government. It is also inconsistent with the legal obligations of the members of the World Trade Organization. Brazil joins the virtual unanimity of the international community in this regard.

National reconciliation, the enjoyment of freedom and prosperity by the Cuban people and the full integration of Cuba in all the mechanisms of the inter-American community are goals that we fully share. In our assessment, lifting the embargo would bring us closer to the accomplishment of these goals.

For all these reasons, Brazil voted in favour of resolution A/51/L.15, in defence of the rules of

international law, the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect of the sovereignty of States.

Mr. Van Dunem "Mbinda" (Angola): The end of the cold war paved the way for increased dialogue and cooperation in the conduct of inter-State relations, as well as in multilateral diplomacy. Seemingly intractable, age-old problems have witnessed dramatic developments, stability and economic development.

As my Minister for Foreign Affairs has stated, the Government of Angola is profoundly concerned by the difficult social and economic situation prevailing in the Republic of Cuba as a result of the financial and economic blockade imposed on that member of the General Assembly.

For that reason, the Government of Angola supports the General Assembly resolutions calling for the lifting of the economic blockade imposed on the Cuban people, who are suffering the negative effects of those measures, and therefore encourages a dialogue with a view to normalizing relations between those two sovereign Member States.

Taking into account the fact that the embargo imposed against Cuba has lasted more than 30 years and that its reinforcement has provoked the suffering of millions of human beings, my delegation — in the interest of upholding the principles of international law and promoting peaceful and friendly relations between nations — voted in favour of resolution A/51/L.15.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the vote.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 27?

It was so decided.

Organization of work

The President: I should like to make an announcement concerning the Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace.

Members will recall that, at the 126th plenary meeting of its fiftieth session, held on 16 September 1996, the Assembly recommended that the Informal Open-ended Working Group resume its work during the fifty-first session. In this regard, I should like to inform members that, following consultations, I have designated the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde, His Excellency Mr. José Luis Barbosa Leao Monteiro, as Chairman of the Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace. I have also designated the Permanent Representative of Belgium, His Excellency Mr. Alex Reyn, as Vice-Chairman of the Working Group. I should like to thank both ambassadors for assuming those responsibilities.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to announce a change in the programme of work of the General Assembly.

Agenda item 42, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity", originally scheduled for Thursday 14 November in the morning as the third item, is postponed to a later date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.